




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

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**FISHERIES (COMMERCIAL FISHERIES) REGULATION, FISHERIES (GENERAL)
(VESSEL TRACKING) AMENDMENT REGULATION, FISHERIES AMENDMENT
DECLARATION**

Disallowance of Statutory Instruments

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (6.00 pm): I rise to oppose this disallowance motion. I want to cover a few things that have been talked about by members of the opposition. One of the claims we keep hearing is that there is no science involved in these particular regulations. After going through all these hearings, I know that there is nearly 10 years worth of science and research that has gone into these regulations—

Mr Furner: Twenty years.

Mr WHITING: I will take the interjection from the minister. Twenty years of careful research has gone into this. I am very concerned about where those opposite are heading to hear them label some of the science that they do not like as infiltrated or tinged with green. This is a very concerning development. To reject normal, fact based science as something that is inconvenient to them is a very concerning development from the other side of the chamber. All I can say is that I am glad they are not astrophysicists in charge of saving earth from a meteor hit because we would be in trouble. All of this kind of thinking leads to the development of the office of scientific quality assurance proposed by the LNP or, as we call it on this side of the House, the office of tinfoil hat assessment. We look forward to seeing that if they ever come back to these benches.

One of the other things we want to rebut is the belief that there is no support for this from recreational fishers. Recreational fishers have given strong support to these regulations. They know what is at stake. At the hearings on the original bill at Redcliffe we heard from Sunfish and the Mayor of Moreton Bay Regional Council, Allan Sutherland, that they are looking to these regulations and the strategy to make sure there are fish for the future. This is very important to recreational fishers and they support this.

In recent times those opposite have tried to raise issues around the VMS. The vessel tracking system is not an EPIRB. It is not a safety device. It is very important to emphasise that. It is dangerous to think that it could be a safety device. Safety devices such as the EPIRB already exist. The VMS technology does not provide the constant updating of position that an EPIRB does. We have to be very careful about saying that this is a safety device.

VMS has been on our trawler fleet for many years. It has been an accepted part of fisheries management for many years around the world. If it fails there is a backup and there is funding to get those backups. The point is that the LNP members were never going to agree to the vessel tracking system. They will constantly find ways to undermine it.

These regulations come down hard on black market fishers. To get rid of these regulations would be to let black market fishers off the hook, so to speak.

Government members interjected.

Mr WHITING: I just thought of that. One thing that Queenslanders will agree on, outside of supporting the State of Origin, is there visceral dislike of black market fishers. That is common across Queensland. My question to the LNP is: why are you opposing regulations that come down hard on black market fishers?

This disallowance motion is flawed badly. If the opposition members had concerns with some elements of the regulation they could have moved to disallow specific sections, but instead they have moved to disallow almost everything. If this LNP motion were passed by this parliament commercial fisheries in Queensland would be in limbo, as the member for Mackay has already said. There would be no regulation to guide or govern what they do. Would the regulation be suspended? Would it be ended or would there be simply nothing regulating commercial fisheries in Queensland?

Unfortunately, this outlook is typical of how the opposition members think. They are not looking at what the regulation is trying to regulate but broadbrush refusing to accept it. They are not comprehending why the regulation exists in the first place. It is very simple. Regulation in the fisheries sector exists to ensure that Queensland has fish for the future and to protect the thousands of jobs that rely on sustainable fisheries.

This disallowance motion would effectively end the ability for commercial operators to operate in fisheries. By disallowing the new commercial fishing regulations there would be no authorisation for commercial fishers to take, possess or sell fisheries resources. Let me repeat that. There would be no authorisation for commercial fishers to take, possess or sell fisheries resources. Their quota entitlements and access rights to the fisheries would not exist.

The shadow minister and his colleagues try to portray themselves as the best friend the commercial fishing sector could have, but this motion would put their livelihood under a huge cloud. There would be the question every time they go out: do I have legal cover? Am I operating legally? This motion would leave the commercial sector in a mess.

The LNP members are all over the shop when it comes to supporting commercial fisheries. What we have seen in recent weeks is that they are, for example, now agreeing with the Humane Society International's approach on sharks. Is the LNP siding with the Greens and embracing this threat to commercial fisheries in Queensland? Put simply, if Queenslanders want Queensland wild caught fish on the table, at the supermarket or at the fish and chip shop, this motion must be opposed.

What is surprising is why this disallowance motion is being moved in the first place. These regulations are, on the whole, similar to the 2008 regulations. When the LNP members were in government they could have changed them. They did not do it because they know they cannot argue against them. They know they cannot argue against the science. They are aimed at reducing overfishing.

Following science has not been one of the strong points of the LNP in recent times. We will not get into the climate change debate—that is an endless one. We need to support these regulations because they are based on science. The sector needs a legal framework and it is the result of long consultation. I note what the department's website says about the history and consultation. It states—

The need for fisheries reform in Queensland has been an ongoing discussion over a number of years, starting with the MRAG review in 2014, followed by the Green Paper in 2016, which received more than 11,000 submissions. The overwhelming message was that all stakeholders want the management of fisheries to be reformed.

The current system is not fit for purpose. There are few catch limits, poor compliance, and high conflict between stakeholders and concerns about bycatch and protected species interactions. Doing nothing is not an option.

We want our fisheries to be sustainable for the future, profitable for our commercial fishers, enjoyable for our recreational fishers and maintain access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders fishers for traditional fishing and commercial fishing development.

The Queensland Government has sought input from all sectors about reforms needed to our major fisheries. Independent advice has also been provided over the last 12 months through the Sustainable Fisheries Expert Panel.

It is clear that there has been ongoing and broad consultation. This process could not have been more transparent.

For those who are listening, I would encourage them to look at the MRAG documents, the fisheries green paper, the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy and the discussion paper. As we have said, these documents have been publicly available. People can comment on them. Consultation on these documents has occurred over a number of years. It is disappointing that seemingly here tonight it looks like the opposition members have not bothered to read these documents or to understand the process to date.

Queenslanders need good fisheries regulations in place to ensure that the sector is sustainable and meets community demands. These regulations deliver that to Queenslanders and they ensure that there is access to the resources for commercial fishers. If this disallowance motion is passed, the

commercial fishing sector would be stranded in no-man's-land, with no legal framework there to protect them. They would be unsure of their legal access and their legal rights. That is why this disallowance motion should be opposed.